



IS DYING TO SELF REALLY NECESSARY?

If you want to live for Christ, you will realize the necessity of “dying to self.” It *is* a necessity. Jesus said so.

Matthew 16:24-25, Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Jesus expressed the idea of “dying to self” in the *Sermon on the Mount* (The Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5 – 7). If you have not read it recently, review it again and notice the various ways in which Jesus taught the necessity of dying to self.

How is it possible to have the “characteristics of the righteous” that are described in the *Beatitudes* (Matthew 5:1-12) without dying to self and wholeheartedly following Jesus? How is it possible to demonstrate a Christ-like life mentioned in the *Sermon on the Mount* without picking up your cross each day and laying aside self-interest in order to follow Christ and His example?

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones in his commentary on the *Sermon on the Mount* said, “The first thing we must do is to face this whole problem of the self in an honest manner. We must cease to make excuses, cease trying to evade and circumvent it. It is to be faced honestly and squarely.” He goes on to state, “If we say we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe that He has died for our sins, it means that our greatest desire should be to die to self.”

Dying to self is an obvious prerequisite to growing in Christ, but it is not something that begins *after* one comes to know Christ. It is the way a person *initially comes* to Christ. As Charles Spurgeon noted, “Learn this lesson—not to trust Christ because you repent, but trust Christ to make you repent; not to come to Christ because you have a broken heart, but to come to Him that He may give you a broken heart; not to come to Him because you are fit to come, but to come to Him because you are unfit to come. Your fitness is your unfitness. Your qualification is your lack of qualification.”

This lack of qualification is what God looks for in using His servants fully (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). It was that way in New Testament days and this has remained a hallmark trait throughout history for those who have a vibrant walk with Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31, For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

One such servant used dynamically by God was George Mueller, who lived in the 19th century. He is primarily known because of his orphanage ministry and his practice of praying for financial support without ever announcing a need. What you may not know is Mr. Mueller’s view of himself. He recognized a need for total dependency on God and total indifference to self. He wrote of his death to self in these words, “George Mueller and his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.”

Is George Muller’s description of himself a description of your life? It must be if you are to be fully conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

This dying to self is not a morbid introspection. Instead, it focuses on the person of Jesus Christ as the Apostle Paul related in Galatians 2:20.

Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews gives similar encouragement.

Hebrews 12:1-3, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

As you study the New Testament, you will recognize the necessity of being totally dependent on Jesus (John 15:5) as you cooperate with Him to make Christ-like changes in your life (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:1).

John 15:5, I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Romans 8:29, For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Ephesians 4:1, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

Is dying to self a necessity for you to mature in Christ? Yes, it is. Someone put it this way, “If you do not die to self, you will live for self. If you live for self, you cannot know the fullness of Jesus Christ in your life.”

Since living for self results in a believer’s spiritual immaturity, ask the Lord to help you live for Him by dying to self. If you get serious about this exchange, rest assured that God will direct the process now and bring it to complete fruition, as Philippians 1:6 promises.

Philippians 1:6, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.